

EMIGRATING INDIANS.

LETTER

FROM THE

SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING INFORMATION

OF THE INADEQUACY OF THE FUND

FOR DEFRAISING

THE EXPENSES ATTENDING THE EMIGRATION

OF THE

CREEK INDIANS.

JANUARY 7, 1828.

Referred to the Committee of Ways and Means.

WASHINGTON :

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1828.

DEPARTMENT OF WAR,

January 7, 1823.

SIR : I have the honor to submit the accompanying letter from the officer in charge of the Office of Indian Affairs, with the view of possessing the House of the information it conveys, especially in regard to the inadequacy of the means now at the disposition of the Executive to sustain the cost arising out of the emigration of the Creek Indians ; and of the necessity, also, of a provision to be made applicable to the emigration of Indians generally.

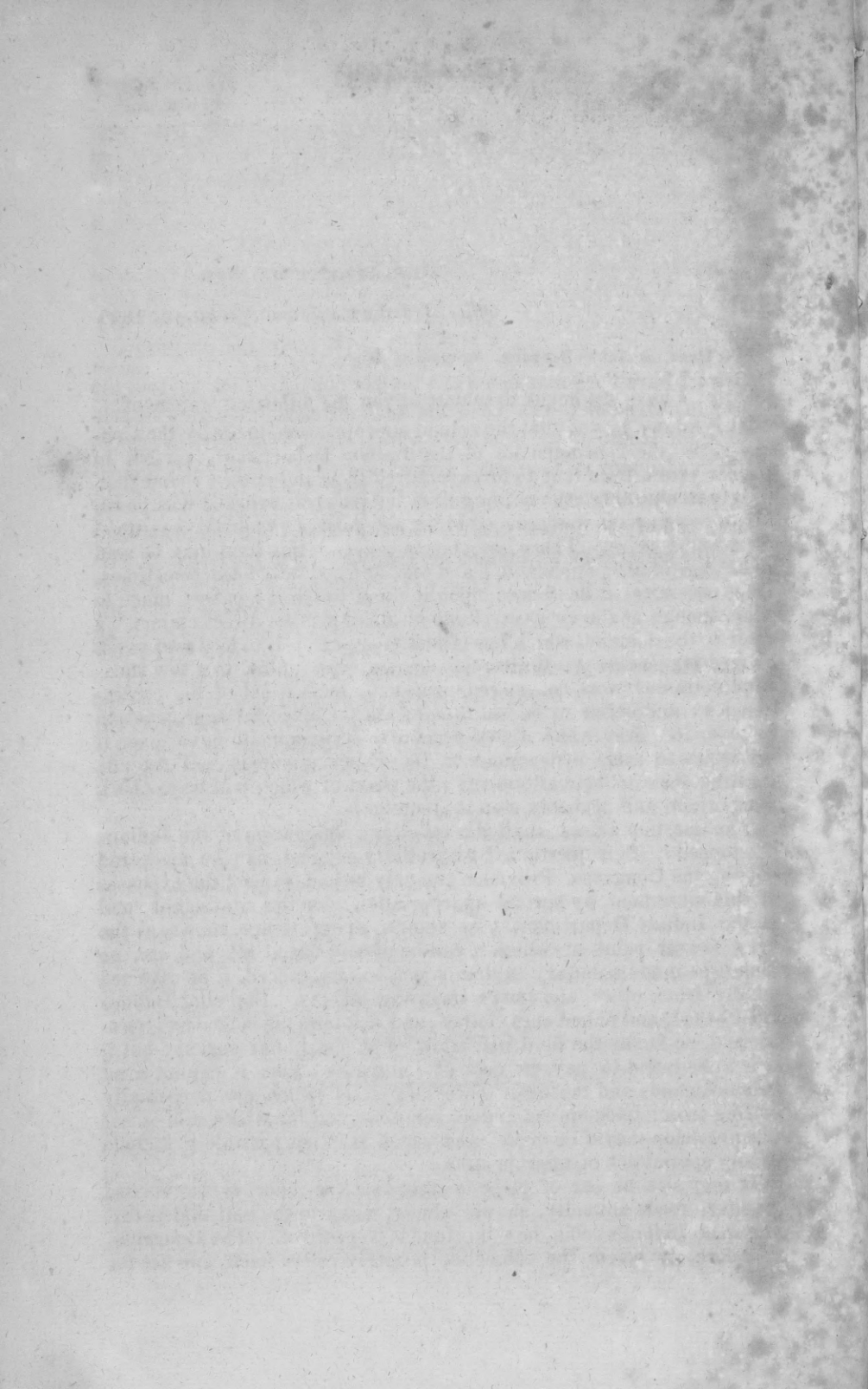
I have the honor to be, with great respect,

Your obedient servant,

JAMES BARBOUR.

To the Honorable ANDREW STEVENSON,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.



DEPARTMENT OF WAR,

*Office of Indian Affairs, January 4, 1828.*To the Honorable JAMES BARBOUR, *Secretary of War* :

SIR : I have the honor to submit to you the following statement :

It is known to you that the annual appropriation, made by the Congress, for the contingencies of the Indian Department, varied, in former years, from four to three hundred thousand dollars ; and that, by great efforts in economizing at every point at which it was possible to retrench, it was reduced to 95,000 dollars, where it has stood for several years. There are objects to which this fund may be said to be *legitimately* applicable ; and one, at least, which has sometimes, from necessity, been forced upon it, and which it has been made to bear, though at the expense of others having more direct claims. I refer to the demand, which has of late years existed, to feed and assist *emigrating* Indians. Whilst this demand was limited to a few thousand dollars, it was considered proper to meet it out of the contingencies ; and better to do so, than to ask for a special appropriation to cover it. But it has of late become so serious, as to have made it necessary to issue instructions to the Superintendents and Agents, limiting them to their allotments ; the effect of which will be to check emigration, and probably stop it altogether.

The question arises, shall the voluntary emigration of the Indians be stopped ? This question, I respectfully suggest, can be answered only by the Congress. Provision can only be had, to meet the expenses of this movement, by special appropriation : for the contingent fund of the Indian Department now stands, as experience shows, at the very lowest point at which it can be of any use at all, and can no longer be made tributary to that object, unless, indeed, it be diverted wholly from other and more imposing objects. Starving Indians must be fed, and naked ones clothed, and sick ones physicked and nursed, and, so far as the fund will allow of it, dead ones buried ; but if it is to be taxed to pay the cost of emigration, then it cannot meet those demands and the other necessary calls which are perpetually arising in our wide-spread Indian relations, and for which it is essential provision should be made, and which it is not possible to include in any special act of appropriation.

It may not be out of place to state that the report of the Second Auditor, made annually, shows, almost down to the nail that is driven in an Indian's coffin, how this fund is disposed of. The Congress, therefore, to whom the subject so properly refers itself, can see for

themselves that it is not possible to sustain the direct demands upon this fund, and pay out of it, also, the cost of emigration, to the extent which is now required.

I respectfully suggest, if it be the pleasure of the Congress to allow the Indians to go west of the Mississippi, that provision be made, *specifically*, to defray the cost of the movement: otherwise, the orders to which I have referred, and which it has been found necessary to issue to the Superintendents and Agents, on this subject, may stop it. This state of things I feel it to be my duty, explicitly, to make known.

I consider it proper, also, to submit to you the state of the fund which is applicable to the removal of the Creeks. There remains of it not quite fifty thousand dollars; and this embraces the means provided for feeding those who may remove, for one year, after they shall arrive at their new homes. About eight hundred, it is believed, may by this time have crossed the Mississippi. But there are other expenses that will attend them before they get beyond the western boundary of Arkansas, where they are destined. What these will be, I have no *data* on which to form an estimate. But supposing the cost of each Indian, *after his arrival*, to be 20 cents a day, and that only 800 will have to be fed for the year, according to treaty stipulations, the cost will be 58,400 dollars, which is, of itself, nearly ten thousand dollars more than remains of the means which have been provided and made applicable to this object.

That the money which remains may be made to go as far as possible, I respectfully suggest, that the Agent be required to contract, in the usual way, for rations, to be furnished to the Indians on their arrival west of the Mississippi; and that the returns for the issues be in the usual forms for such supplies; and that suitable depots be established in the Creek country, east of the Mississippi, and rations contracted for, also, for these, *for the government of the future*. The cost of moving the (about) 800 Indians has, so far, been enormous, but has arisen, doubtless, out of the absence of a system, which is so apt to attend upon all new undertakings.

To cover the cost of the Creek emigration alone, and to feed them west of the Mississippi, I suggest that one hundred thousand dollars be appropriated, and fifty thousand dollars additional, to be made applicable to emigration generally from other sections of the United States, other than that occupied by the Creeks.

Should a bill pass for providing a permanent home, and a Government for those homeless and hapless wanderers, which many of them are now looking for with an anxiety equalled only by their own apprehensions, that without them they will perish, (and never, so far as my personal inspection of their condition has extended, were apprehensions better founded,) then provision, I respectfully suggest, might be made in that bill for all the objects connected with not only the providing of that home, and for its government, but for the means to enable them to reach the one, and enjoy, at last, the saving influences of the other.

I take this occasion to possess you of a letter received from Col. Ogden, of New York, enclosing a copy of one addressed to Mr. Webster by James Wadsworth. The opinions and reasoning of the writer, I need not add, are not only illustrative of the fate of the Indians of the past, as history itself shows, but are pretty conclusive, also, as to what must be their fate in the future, unless they shall be placed without the reach of causes that have heretofore proved so destructive, and possessed of those rights and privileges without which, as human beings, it is now my firm conviction, they cannot long exist at all.

I have the honor to be,

With great respect,

Your obedient servant,

THOS. L. McKENNEY Y.

NEW YORK, 29th December, 1827.

SIR : Mr. Wadsworth, of Genesee, has just submitted to my inspection a letter recently addressed by him to Mr. Webster, of the Senate, on the subject of Indian civilization. I have perused it with great satisfaction, and, in the belief that it will not be uninteresting to you, I have had it transcribed, and now send you a copy. The sentiments contained in it appear to me to be founded on principles of practical good sense and pure benevolence.

You will oblige me, whenever a convenient occasion shall offer, by presenting this document, for perusal, to the Secretary of War, whose reflections, as I infer from his past communications to Congress, have also been employed in relation to this very interesting subject.

I am, very respectfully, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

T. L. OGDEN.

THOS. L. McKENNEY, Esq.

SIR: I read, many years since, in a number of the N. A. Review, an article on the situation of the Indians dispersed over the reservations in the State of Massachusetts. I cannot now lay my hand on the number. I believe it was in 1812 or 1813. The writer takes a rapid view of the Indians from the time of Cotton Mather. when, if I recollect, there were thirty or forty regular churches. From that period to the present, the State has supported one or two clergymen, and several schoolmasters, on each reservation.

But notwithstanding the labors, prompted by the pious zeal and benevolence of our forefathers, the Indians have been gradually, but regularly, sinking in moral character, and the Reviewers describe them, in 1812, as a miserable race, part negro, part white, and part Indian,

too degraded to be described. This, I believe, is a faithful picture of the Indians in Connecticut and Rhode Island; and I have no hesitation in saying, that the Indians on the reservations in this State are rapidly approximating to the same degraded condition. The writer, if I recollect, considers the case a remediless one, and advises to the application of funds given for the support of Indians to other objects. The article referred to, drew my attention to the state of the Indians many years since, and I still entertain a confident opinion, that the red man is as susceptible of civilization as the white man. The fault is not the Indian's. It is for want of an intelligent course of treatment on the part of the white man. There has been real honest zeal enough expended, but it has been zeal without thought or intelligence, and the experiment, it must be confessed, has hitherto totally failed.

We have been training the Indians on the reservations in New England for two hundred years, and they have fallen to a pitch of degradation too painful to describe. The Indians in this State have been under the same course of treatment for forty or fifty years, and, in half a century more, they will compare with their brethren in New England. Are we, then, to abandon our red brethren, and consider their civilization as a hopeless case? By no means. Let us rather examine and ascertain what are the elements of civilization. By what process has the white man of England been raised from his semi-barbarous state, at the time of the Roman invasion, to his present comparatively improved and refined state? I am sensible that the discussion of this subject cannot be comprised in a letter. If Cæsar, when he invaded England, had introduced, instead of a military Government, monitorial schools, a free press, the constitution and laws of England modified to the then state of society, and the benign principles of Christianity, how soon would these all-controlling causes have changed the character of our savage ancestors! Man, whether red or white, is the creature of laws and education. To show that our training of the Indians has not been judicious, let us take one or two single cases. Suppose, immediately after the extinction of the Indian title, and on the first settlement of Oneida County, New York, a respectable Indian family had been allowed, by law, to retain and hold, in fee simple, a lot of one hundred acres. Suppose the adjoining lots purchased and occupied by respectable New England farmers. My object is to ascertain whether an Indian family, placed in this situation, which, at first view, will be considered as highly favorable to its improvement, would become refined and elevated in their moral habits. Examine, if you please, the yearly progress of the New England farmers and the Indian family—say the children of each are about of the same age. I will allow that the Indian children will copy after, and attain, tolerable proficiency in the operations on the farms and in the houses of their New England neighbors. Suppose the children of the Indian and New England families of an age to go into society; will the children of each mingle in society on equal terms? A step further. Will the New England farmers give their daughters to the Indian sons in marriage? In this stage, and, indeed, in every stage

of this experiment, will not the Indian family perceive, and be made to feel, that they belong to a degraded cast in society, and will not moral debasement immediately follow? I need not follow up this experiment to the inevitable degradation of the daughters and sons of the Indian family, when they will become hewers of wood and drawers of water to their neighbors. In this case, I have considered what I believe an essential in the civilization of man. The holding of land in severalty, but which, of itself, though an essential, is not sufficient to produce the great result. From this view of a single family, we will pass to an Indian reservation, surrounded by farms inhabited by a white population. The Indians are at once deprived of hunting, the great resource for subsistence in a savage state. They hold their lands in common, and not in severalty. They are sensible and realize that the educated white man can, at any time, purchase their improvements, by direct or indirect means, of their chiefs. The Indian is a tenant at sufferance; he is cut off from the great stimuli of exertion to the white man; the enjoyment of comforts arising from protected industry, and the rights and accumulation of property; the distinctions arising from personal considerations, and the possession of property, and the desire, so powerful in the white man, but not felt by the red man in his savage state, of transmitting his inheritance to his children. The Indians find themselves a unit in a vast community, and a degraded race, despised by that community. Would not the white man, in the same situation, immediately sink into debasement? Would not the white man, equally deprived of incentives to exertion, seek solace and forgetfulness of his wretchedness in intoxication? Here I ask, is it not perfectly idle to expect persevering labor, a regard for the rights of property, while he possesses no rights himself, no enlightened, moral, or religious views, nor an elevated tone of character, to grow out of this state of society?

I will now submit, for your consideration, an outline of a system, which, if carried into honest and thorough execution, will, it appears evident to me, raise the Indian to the dignity of a civilized man. Set apart a tract of country, say 40 or 50 miles square, at Green Bay, on the west shore of Lake Michigan.* Grant this tract, in fee simple, to the Indians who still linger with the white population in the Eastern and Middle States. This is certainly but a small pittance for the mighty empire which the white man has obtained possession of—by what means, this is not the place to inquire. Divide this territory into townships, and subdivide the townships into lots of 100 acres each. Give to every family of Indians, which remain with us, a modified or regulated title to one or two hundred acres. The land to be inalienable in trust, or in any other manner, to the white man; but inheritable, at once, and alienable, after a certain number of years, to Indians. Give this people a territorial government, and a code of laws, adapted to the first stages of civilization. Give them the power of making their own laws after a certain period. Give them the

* QUIRE. Should not the Government reserve the strip of land embracing the portage, &c. between the Fox and Ouisconsin rivers?

right of sending, immediately, a delegate to Congress.* I need not go farther into the details of the form of government, and a code of laws suited to the rude character of an Indian population. A Commissioner, vested with ample powers, would be necessary for many years. Provision ought to be made for monitorial schools and clergymen; the latter would, no doubt, be supported, for many years, by our charitable societies. If it be asked, what more does your plan contemplate than is done already for the Indians on the reservations, I answer, it removes the insuperable obstacle to improvement—the degradation of cast. It gives to the Indian the same incentives to exertion which lead the white man to incessant toil and effort, both bodily and mental. A taste of the comforts arising from industry and the protection of property, will lead the Indian, step by step, to the same exertions as are made by the white man. (See note.)

I have not spoken, perhaps, sufficiently of the effects of education and knowledge on the human mind, and of the new sources of intellectual, moral, social, and religious enjoyment, which a new and improved state of society will gradually open to the Indian's mind. The desire of giving to his children the fruits of his industry, so intense in the white man, will immediately follow the power of accomplishing its object. May I beg of you to give your mind, for a few hours, to this subject. What we are doing now, and what our pious fathers have been doing for two hundred years, is literally a waste of time and money. To persevere in this course, is unbefitting the intelligence of the age we live in. After examining this subject, it is impossible to doubt that the Indian can be civilized, possessing, as he does, native faculties of mind and body, fully equal to the white man. The intellectual endowments of the human mind are not impaired in the savage state. I do not speak of the mongrel state of society on the reservations.

The outline which I have suggested may be very imperfect and defective; but, if gentlemen at the Seat of Government will give their hearts and minds to this subject, I feel a perfect confidence in their conviction, that a grant, in fee simple, of a moderate tract of country, a territorial government, and code of laws, judiciously framed, will lead immediately to an amelioration, and, in thirty or forty years, to the civilization of the red men of America.

I need not ask whether this return, so perfectly within our means, so insignificant to us, so all important to the Indian, is not due from the white man.

I will add but a single remark. Imagine a territory populated by Indians, in the enjoyment of the rights and privileges of an American citizen, speaking, writing, and thinking, in the English language; where will you look to as readily as to this territory for your future Homers, Miltons, and Shakspeares?

I am, sir, &c.

JAMES WADSWORTH.

Hon. D. WEBSTER.

* I beg you not to be startled at this proposition; there are many Indian chiefs who would not disgrace the floor of Congress.

NOTE.—"The pursuit of wealth, that is, the endeavor to accumulate the means of future subsistence and enjoyment, is, to the mass of mankind, the great source of moral improvement. When does a laborer become sober and industrious, attentive to his health and to his character? As soon as he begins to save," &c.

[See Westminster Review, No. 15, for July, 1827, page 186.]

THE HISTORY OF THE
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